

Rudy Roy (#1124)

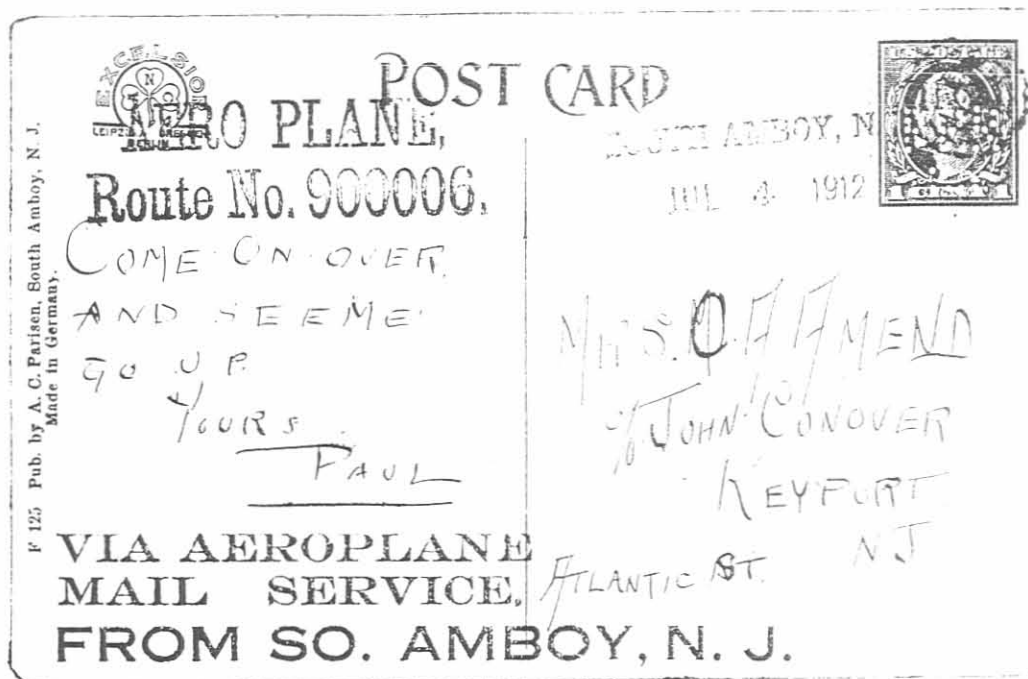


Figure 1 - PRR on Pioneer Air Mail Flight Post Card



Figure 2 - Pennsylvania Railroad Station at South Amboy, NJ

Recently I received an auction catalog, and the first item that I noticed was a color photograph of Figure 1 on the outside cover. The fact that it was a perfin cover was immediately (to me) recognizable, and I quickly turned to the page where the lot was listed to see what the description was. Sure

enough, it was what it appeared to be -- a postcard used on a pioneer air mail flight. The description confirmed that it was probably an authorized use, for the picture side of the card (Figure 2) was of the new Pennsylvania Railroad Station in South Amboy, New Jersey. If not strictly an authorized

use, the user certainly had access to PRR perfins.

The latest (5th.) edition of the *American Air Mail Catalog* lists this flight as Pioneer No. 38 (earlier listings had it as Pioneer No. 35 and No. 32). The flight was authorized on June 25, 1912, and it occurred on July 4, 1912, from South Amboy to Perth Amboy, New Jersey. It was the first air mail flight in New Jersey, and the aircraft used was a Burgess-Wright hydro-plane. The aerial route (U.S. POD Route #609,001) was operated from the Raritan River at South Amboy to the post office at Perth Amboy, a distance of two miles. Sixteen pounds of first class mail was carried. The pilot was Oliver G. Simons.

One notable error, as seen in Figure 1, was the incorrect handstamp indicating that the route was "900006" vice the correct "609001." Nearly all items also have the special cachet "VIA AEROPLANE/MAIL SERVICE FROM SO. AMBOY, N.J."

The perfin pattern is P199 (PRR/Co) of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, a common pattern off cover, and usually not commanding much of a premium when found on-cover. However add it to the usage shown here, and it is anything but common.

This particular item has another feature, the principal reason why it does not now reside in my collection! The straight line cancel on this card has not been seen before by collectors of Pioneer air mail covers, and a friend of mine who collects pioneer air mail now has this item in his collection. I was prepared to make a substantial bid for the cover, but determined that my bidding would only drive up the cost and not secure the cover for me. But, now that I know where the cover is, perhaps some day?

This cover has several items that make it unique (or, more properly, the only one known) -- it is the first recorded copy of the straight line cancel for this flight, and it is the only known Pioneer air mail cover with a perfin.

References:

1. *American Air Mail Catalog*, Volume 1, 1975 edition.
2. "June 25, 1912: - South Amboy, N.J. - Perth Amboy, N.J. (No. 35)." Anon. *Air Post Journal*, February 1957, p. 160.

3. "Pioneer No. 32 - South Amboy - Perth Amboy, July 4, 1912." By T.J. O'Sullivan, *Air Post Journal*, October 1962, pp. 1-3.

4. Correspondence with Stephen Reinhard, Pioneer Air Mail specialist/collector, who also provided the photocopies for the illustrations.